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Address by Admiral Stansfield Turner
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Association of Former Intelligence Officers
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I thought what might interest you most would be what I perceive to be different about being an intelligence officer today from just a few years ago.

In these past few years, three factors have strongly dictated change in the intelligence profession.

First, the attitude of the United States toward its role in international affairs is changing. That places new and often quite different demands on both the collection and the analysis of intelligence.

Second, the explosion of technology has changed the whole way we look at collection. It has forced us to rethink both how to handle the huge volumes of raw intelligence which we can now collect, and how to take the best advantage of both technical and human means of collection.

Third, the domestic environment in which we exist has changed. The fact that we live in a fishbowl today can neither be ignored nor wished back to former times.

Let me discuss each of these three important factors briefly. Today public attitudes toward the role of the United States in foreign affairs are clearly in transition. We are moving from an activist, interventionist outlook to one which recognizes much more clearly the limits on our ability to influence events in foreign countries. We are not becoming isolationists, but are coming to a more balanced view of where and what we can do on the international scene. There is no question that we must always play a major role, but today it must be gauged more carefully than ever.

Good intelligence will help us determine where and when it is in the long-term interests of this country to become involved. To do that, however, we must be better informed about more areas of the world and about more topics than ever before. We must be concerned not just with military and political affairs, but economic trends, food resources, population growth, narcotics flow, international terrorism, and the illegal transfer of American technology. Intelligence faces a broader, more demanding set of requirements than ever before. People with your background can well appreciate the impact that such expansion must have: on recruiting, on training, on priorities for funding new collection systems, etc.

The second area of greatest change is being driven by the technological revolution in collection capability. Our capabilities in the photographic and signals intelligence areas, especially, are growing more rapidly than anyone, I think, ever imagined. Our real problem is becoming how to process, evaluate and act on what we are able to collect. The importance of being able to screen information quickly and efficiently, even old information, which at the time did not seem to be relevant, has been underscored in just the past few weeks. I refer to the issue of the Soviet brigade in Cuba. In 1963 we estimated the ground combat forces which the Soviets had introduced into Cuba had all been withdrawn. It was not until 1978 that we began to have strong suspicions that this was no longer the case. Thanks to an intelligence breakthrough in August of this year, we were able to adduce persuasive evidence that there is now a Soviet combined arms combat brigade in Cuba. Building on that evidence, and using new clues we obtained recently, we have reexamined data from 1962 until present. These probings still persuade us that the combat capability was withdrawn in 1963-64, but also show that by at least the mid-1970s such a capability had been reestablished in essentially its present form; that is, a combined arms brigade with three motorized infantry battalions, one tank battalion, and all of the normal artillery, anti-aircraft, anti-tank, and other support elements common to a Soviet combatant unit of this size. This relook at 17 years worth of stored data could not have been done without the prodigious computer storage, retrieval and sorting capabilities which the Intelligence Community now possesses.

What has happened to HUMINT as technology has burgeoned? The value of the human intelligence agent has been enhanced. As photographic and signals intelligence answer questions, they also raise new ones, new ones which often only an individual on the ground can answer. Thus, today the challenge is not only to be able to absorb and use the vast quantities of data we obtain from technological systems, but to be able to meld them with human intelligence activities so that each can take best advantage of its strengths and compensate for the other's weaknesses. The intelligence officer is too valuable an asset and his skills are too hard to develop for us to risk him unnecessarily. By targetting him more carefully than ever, we are helping him to focus on the problems which have the biggest payoff. In spite of newspaper allegations to the contrary, there has not been nor will there be any diminution of the importance of HUMINT in the Intelligence Community of this nation as long as I am its Director.

To most, the melding together of collection capabilities may sound very logical and very simple. I know you realize this is not the case. Because technical capabilities are growing so fast; because human capabilities must be refocused; and because intelligence as you know is a large bureaucracy spread over many different government agencies and departments, each with its own priorities and concerns, we can no longer do business in the traditional manner. It has taken some fundamental restructuring to accommodate these changes. Since the National Security Act was passed in 1947, the Director of Central Intelligence has been authorized to coordinate all of the national intelligence activities of the country. However, until the President's

new Executive Order of a year and a half ago, he had inadequate authority to really do so. That Order strengthened my authority over the budgets and the collection activities of all of our intelligence organizations. This change is still evolving, but it is coming along well and is making a substantial difference in the management of intelligence.

The third element of change I mentioned is the increasing public attention to intelligence activities since the investigations of 1975 and 1976. Those investigations brought to American intelligence more public attention than has ever been focused on a major intelligence organization. That process destroyed much of the support and confidence which the public traditionally had for its intelligence services. Today I sense a gradual return of that support and confidence, but I also recognize a lingering suspicion of what intelligence organizations are doing. The easy response to this would be to ignore it. I have been advised by some to do just that. Unfortunately, that choice is one that we don't have. The door has been opened; the public has looked in, and especially with regard to our activities involving American citizens, they didn't like what they saw. The door cannot be closed. The public won't let us nor will the Congress let us. What then is the answer?

I believe the only realistic answer is a controlled openness program. We are supported by public funds; we do a great deal of work for the government which, incidentally, is also useful to the general public. I see no harm in sharing information with the public which can be declassified. In fact, I see a number of real benefits. It permits us to draw the line between what will be open and what will not, rather than someone else; it permits the public to reap some direct benefit from taxes spent for intelligence; it demonstrates in a general but substantial way the importance of the work we do on their behalf; and it rebuilds a degree of public support which, had it existed five years ago, might have enabled us to weather better the often unfounded attacks on our Community.

But when I say controlled openness, and that we draw the line, I mean just that. Openness does not encompass legitimate, classified intelligence, nor information regarding sources or methods. In fact, at the same time that we are trying to be more open with the public than ever before, we are vigorously plugging the loopholes in the law which prevent us from prosecuting people who deliberately reveal classified information.

The improper dissemination of classified information is fast becoming our most serious problem. Leaks from within the government are a big part of this problem, but a part which we are working to control. Just as a career of security consciousness imbues you with the continuing feeling of responsibility to protect that classified or sensitive information which you learned in the course of your duties, each new employee must be made to feel that same serious, life-long responsibility. Better security measures are a part of the answer, but generating a true respect for classified information by those with access to it is the only solution. One way of doing that is through a conscious program to purge the system of overly classified information which tends to lessen our respect for the security system.

As I know you are well aware, another part of the problem results from the authorship of books and articles intended to disrupt legitimate intelligence activities. We should be able to do something about this but are severely constrained. Phillip Agee, for example, is still making a profession of exposing everything which he learned about the CIA or which he can find out. He and others regularly publish the slick bulletin, "Covert Action," here in Washington. Its professed objective is to identify undercover American intelligence officers around the world with results which I don't have to detail for this audience. I have virtually no legal recourse against this kind of activity. Consequently, I have proposed a new criminal statute which would make it an offense to disclose the identity of undercover CIA persons and agents whose relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency must be deliberately concealed. The proposal is now being reviewed by the Administration. Senator Bentsen of Texas has already introduced his own version of this bill and several other versions have been introduced in the House. Legislation such as this and another bill narrowing what we are required to provide under the Freedom of Information Act would be most helpful to us and beneficial to the nation. They are both examples of our increasing interaction with the law.

We are even stymied when it comes to protecting classified information. There are some thirty U.S. laws which make it a crime to reveal tax information, commodity futures, and other commercial information. Almost no comparable legislation protects national security information. The law under which we generally must prosecute an individual for revealing classified information is the antiquated Espionage Act of 1917. Under it, proof of intent to harm the United States is required. You don't need to be a lawyer to appreciate the difficulty in proving intent of any kind. As long as an individual professes to believe that America would be better off as a result of his actions, it is difficult to prove that he intends to harm the country. We are also proposing legislation to correct this and I ask your support.

Other dilemmas we face center on the many rules and regulations recently applied to intelligence activities, especially those to ensure the privacy of American citizens. The rights of Americans must be of concern to all of us. Yet, because these rules and regulations are new and often complex and because they must be interpreted in the light of our sometimes unique activities, they have had a heavy impact on the speed and flexibility with which we have been traditionally capable of operating. Very often questions of constitutional law have required both the Attorney General's staff and my legal staff to issue legal decisions in the midst of an operational crisis.

Let me give you one example. Over a year ago a country was under siege. The best information coming out of that country came from the ham radio of an American missionary. But, as you know, under an Executive Order we are prohibited from conducting electronic surveillance of American persons. A ruling was finally made that as long as the missionary stuck to the CB and normal ham radio bands, it was alright, we could listen. But if he tried to disguise his broadcast as well he

might in that situation, that would indicate his desire for privacy and we would have to cease listening--and cease learning what was going on.

As you are well aware, complex issues such as these must be interpreted by people in the field who are not attorneys. The initiative of the intelligence operator can be dulled by this need to ensure that all applicable legal standards are met. Uncertainty can lead to overcaution and reduced capability. Today, we are almost forced to avoid operations when there is a probability that an American may be involved. This reduces our flexibility to respond in crisis situations.

It is my hope that much of this can be corrected by the passage of charters for the Intelligence Community. I realize that not everyone agrees with the idea of charters--it is a debatable issue with solid arguments on both sides. However, a great deal has changed, in this decade especially, and the clock cannot be turned back to the 1960s. There are those who would like to see the Community subjected to close, external control; others would emasculate the Community completely. The President and I believe that if the Community is to survive and continue to be able to perform the unique service to this nation that it has for over 32 years, then its authorities and its limitations must be clearly laid out--as much to protect the Intelligence Community from its enemies as to provide it with a firm basis for the future. Some kind of legislation is highly likely to emerge. Hence it is important that we participate actively in its formulation.

Let me end with a note of optimism, because that is just how I feel about the outlook today. I think that we have turned the corner after nearly six difficult years. Just this past Monday night, in his speech to the nation, the President said, "We are enhancing our intelligence capability in order to monitor Soviet and Cuban military activities--both in Cuba and throughout the world. We will increase our efforts to guard against damage to our crucial intelligence sources and our methods of collection, without impairing civil and constitutional rights." That support of the President toward our intelligence activities is much more likely today to be reflected by the Congress and in the general public than even a year ago.

Appreciation of the importance of good intelligence is returning. Momentum is building for stronger intelligence capabilities. Yet those capabilities must reflect the changes in the environment around us, especially the three factors I dwelt on in the beginning. Thus, it is that we are undergoing in substantial internal change. The Community will never look precisely as it once did--but different is not less capable. You intelligence professionals, both active and retired, recognize this more than most. It is to you to whom the rest of the public must turn for a better understanding of the many changes which are taking place. And in this regard, I ask you for your support.